

New generation of ammunition for the Navy

And a possible 300 new jobs at the Joliet Army Arsenal

By Amy Bayer
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WASHINGTON — Alliant Techsystems Inc. has signed a joint venture with a Norwegian ammunition company that could bring 300 new jobs to Joliet.

Under the terms of the deal, announced Friday by Illinois Sen. Alan Dixon, Alliant will work with Raufoss A/S of Norway to produce the next generation of medium calibre ammunition at the Joliet Army Arsenal.

The new ammunition, which fires by pyrotechnic ignition rather than by a mechanical or electronic fuse, uses technology developed by Raufoss.

The Norwegian firm, hoping to sell the ammunition to the U.S. Navy, was told it would not be eligible for a contract unless it produced the ammunition in the United States.

Dixon, chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Readiness, Sustainability and Support, then steered Raufoss to Illinois, where three firms competed to participate in a joint venture.

Raufoss selected Alliant over the Talley Industries plant in Joliet, and Olin Electronics, which has a plant in East Alton.

Although he has been a critic of joint ventures that require U.S. industry to share technology with other nations, Dixon said the Alliant venture is a "win-win" situation.

"I don't have any objection to people coming into this country to do their work," he said.

Under a "memorandum of understanding," the two firms will cooperate to produce .20, .25, and .30 mm multipurpose ammunition. The rounds will be made, loaded and assembled in Joliet.

Pyrotechnic ammunition is considered more adaptable, safer and more destructive